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*Can. Macleod,  
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# WEE DAVIE.

BY THE LATE  
NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D



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# WEE DAVIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

"WEE DAVIE" was the only child of William Thorburn, blacksmith. He had reached the age at which he could venture, with prudence and reflection, on a journey from one chair to another; his wits kept alive by maternal warnings of "Tak care, Davie; mind the fire, Davie." When the journey was ended in safety, and he looked over his shoulders with a crow of joy to his mother, he was rewarded, in addition to the rewards of his own brave and adventurous spirit, by such a smile as equalled only his own, and by the well-merited approval of "Weel done, Davie!"

Davie was the most powerful and influential member of the household. Neither the British fleet, nor the French army, nor the Armstrong gun, had the power of doing what Davie did. They might as well have tried to make a primrose grow or a lark sing!

He was, for example, a wonderful stimulus to labour. The smith had been rather disposed to idleness before his son's arrival. He did not take to his work on cold mornings as he might have done, and was apt to neglect many opportunities, which offered themselves, of better-

ing his condition ; and Jeanie was easily put off by some plausible objection when she urged her husband to make an additional honest penny to keep the house. But "the bairn" became a new motive to exertion ; and the thought of leaving him and Jeanie more comfortable, in case sickness laid the smith aside, or death took him away, became like a new sinew to his powerful arm, as he wielded the hammer, and made it ring the music of hearty work on the sounding anvil. The meaning of benefit-clubs, sick-societies, and penny-banks, was fully explained by "wee Davie."

Davie also exercised a remarkable influence on his father's political views and social habits. The smith had been fond of debates on political questions ; and no more sonorous growl of discontent than his could be heard against "the powers that be," the injustice done to the masses, or the misery which was occasioned by class legislation. He had also made up his mind not to be happy or contented, but only to endure life as a necessity laid upon him, until the required reforms in church and state, at home and abroad, had been attained. But his wife, without uttering a syllable on matters which she did not even pretend to understand ; by a series of acts *out* of Parliament ; by reforms in household arrangements ; by introducing good *bills* into her own House of Commons ; and by a charter, whose points were chiefly very commonplace ones,—such as a comfortable meal, a tidy home, a clean fireside, a polished grate, above all, a cheerful countenance and womanly love,—by these *radical* changes she had made her husband wonderfully fond of his home. He was, under this teaching, getting every day too contented for a patriot, and too happy for a man in an ill-governed



world. His old companions at last could not coax him out at night. He was lost as a member of one of the most philosophical clubs in the neighbourhood. "His old pluck," they said, "was gone." The wife, it was alleged by the patriotic bachelors, had "cowed" him, and driven all the spirit out of him. But "wee Davie" completed this revolution. I shall tell you how.

One failing of William's had hitherto resisted Jeanie's silent influence. The smith had formed the habit, before he was married, of meeting a few companions, "just in a friendly way," on pay-nights at a public-house. It was true that he was never "what might be called a drunkard"—"never lost a day's work"—"never was the worse for liquor," &c. But, nevertheless, when he entered the snuggerly in Peter Wilson's whisky-shop, with the blazing fire and comfortable atmosphere ; and when, with half-a-dozen talkative, and, to him, pleasant fellows and old companions, he sat round the fire, and the glass circulated ; and the gossip of the week was discussed ; and racy stories were told ; and one or two songs sung, linked together by memories of old merry-meetings ; and current jokes were repeated, with humour, of the tyrannical influence which some would presume to exercise on "innocent social enjoyment"—then would the smith's brawny chest expand, and his face beam, and his feelings become malleable, and his sixpences begin to melt, and flow out in generous sympathy into Peter Wilson's fozy hand, to be counted greedily beneath his sodden eyes. And so it was that the smith's wages were always lessened by Peter's gains. His wife had her fears—her horrid anticipations—but did not like to "even to" her husband anything so dreadful as what she in her heart dreaded. She took her own way, however, to win him to the house

and to good, and gently insinuated wishes rather than expressed them. The smith, no doubt, she comforted herself by thinking, was only "merry," and never ill-tempered or unkind,—“yet at times—” “and then, what if—!” Yes, Jeanie, you are right! The demon sneaks into the house by degrees, and at first may be kept out, and the door shut upon him; but let him only once take possession, then he will keep it, and shut the door against everything pure, lovely, and of good report,—barring it against thee and “wee Davie,” ay, and against One who is best of all,—and will fill the house with sin and shame, with misery and despair! But “wee Davie,” with his arm of might, drove the demon out. It happened thus:—

One evening when the smith returned home so that “you could *know it* on him,” Davie toddled forward; and his father, lifting him up, made him stand on his knee. The child began to play with the locks of the Samson, to pat him on the cheek, and to repeat with glee the name of “dad-a.” The smith gazed on him intently, and with a peculiar look of love, mingled with sadness. “Isn’t he a bonnie bairn?” asked Jeanie, as she looked over her husband’s shoulder at the child, nodding and smiling to him. The smith spoke not a word, but gazed intently upon his boy, while some sudden emotion was strongly working in his countenance.

“It’s done!” he at last said, as he put his child down.

“What’s wrang! what’s wrang!” exclaimed his wife as she stood before him, and put her hands round his shoulders, bending down until her face was close to his.

“Everything is wrang, Jeanie.”

“Willy, what is’t? are ye no weel?—tell me what’s wrang wi’ you?—oh, tell me!” she exclaimed, in evident alarm.

"It's a' richt noo," he said, rising up and seizing the child. He lifted him to his breast, and kissed him. Then looking up in silence, he said, "Davie has done it, along wi' you, Jeanie. Thank God, I am a free man!"

His wife felt awed, she knew not how.

"Sit doon," he said, as he took out his handkerchief, and wiped away a tear from his eye, "and I'll tell you a' about it."

Jeanie sat on a stool at his feet, with Davie on her knee. The smith seized the child's little hand in one of his own, and with the other took his wife's.

"I hav'na been what ye may ca' a drunkard," he said, slowly, and like a man abashed, "but I hae been often as I shouldna hae been, and as, wi' God's help, I never, never will be again!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Jeanie.

"Let me speak," said William; "to think, Jeanie,"—here he struggled as if something was choking him,—  
"to think that for whisky I might beggar you and wee Davie; tak the claes aff your back; drive you to the workhouse; break your heart; and ruin my bonnie bairn, that loves me sae weel; ay, ruin him in saul and body, for time and for eternity! God forgie me! I canna stand the thocht o't, let alane the reality!"  
The strong man rose, and little accustomed as he was to shew his feelings, he kissed his wife and child.

"It's done, it's done!" he said; "as I'm a leevan man, it's done! But dinna greet, Jeanie. Thank God for you and Davie, my best blessings."

"Except Himsel'!" said Jeanie, as she hung on her husband's neck.

"And noo, woman," replied the smith, "nae mair



about it ; it's done. Gie wee Davie a piece, and get the supper ready."

"Wee Davie" was also a great promoter of social intercourse; an unconscious link between man and man; and a great practical "unionist." He healed breaches, reconciled differences, and was a peacemaker between kinsfolk and neighbours. For example: Jeanie's parents were rather opposed to her marriage with the smith. Some said it was because they belonged to the rural aristocracy of country farmers. They regretted, therefore, it was alleged—though their regret was expressed only to old friends—the day when the lame condition of one of their horses had brought Thorburn to visit their stable, and ultimately their house. Thorburn, no doubt, was admitted to be a sensible, well-to-do man; but then he was, at best, but a common smith; and Jeanie was good-looking, and "by ordinary," with expectations, too, of some "tocher." Her mother, with the introduction, "Tho' I say it, that shouldna say it," was fond of enlarging on Jeanie's excellences, and commenting on the poor smith, with pauses of silence, and expressions of hope "that she might be mistaken," and "that it was ill to ken a body's ways," all of which remarks, from their very mystery, were more depreciatory than any direct charges. But when "wee Davie" was born, the old couple deemed it proper and due to themselves—not to speak of the respect due to their daughter, whom they sincerely loved—to come and visit her. Her mother had been with Jeanie at an earlier period; and the house was so clean, and Thorburn so intelligent, and the child pronounced to be so like old David Armstrong, Jeanie's father, especially about the forehead, that the two families, as the smith remarked, were evidently being welded.

so that a few more gentle hammerings would make them one.

"Wee Davie," as he grew up, became the fire of love which heated the hearts of good metal so as to enable favourable circumstances to give the necessary finishing stroke which would permanently unite them. These circumstances were constantly occurring; until, at last, Armstrong called every market-day to see his daughter and little grandson. The old man played with the boy, (who was his only grandson,) and took him on his knee, and put a "sweetie" into his mouth, and evidently felt as if he himself was reproduced and lived again in the child. This led to closer intercourse, until David Armstrong admitted that William Thorburn was one of the most sensible men he knew; and that he would not only back him against any of his acquaintances for a knowledge of a good horse, but for wonderful information as to the state of the country generally, especially of the landed interest; and for sound views on the high rent of land. Mrs Armstrong finally admitted that Jeanie was not so far mistaken in her choice of a husband. The good woman always assumed that the sagacity of the family was derived from her own side of the house.

But whatever doubts still lingered in their minds as to the wisdom of their daughter's marriage, were all dispelled by one look of "wee Davie."

"I'm just real proud about that braw bairn o' Jeanie's," she used to say to her husband; remarking one day, with a chuckling laugh and smile, "D'ye no think yersel, gudeman, that wee Davie has a look o' auld Davie?"

"Maybe, maybe," replied old David; "but I aye think he's our ain bairn we lost thirty years syne."

"That has been in my ain mind," said his wife, with a sigh; "but I never liked to say it." Then, after a moment's silence, she added, with a smile, "But he's no the waur o' being like baith."

Again:—there lived in the same common passage, and opposite to William Thorburn's door, an old soldier, a pensioner. He was a bachelor, and by no means disposed to hold intercourse with his neighbours. He greatly disliked the noise of children, and maintained that "an hour's drill every day would alone make them tolerable." "Obedience to authority, that's the rule; right about, march! That's the only exercise for them," the Corporal would say to some father of a numerous family in the "close," as he flourished his stick with a smile rather than a growl. Jeanie pronounced him to be "a selfish body." Thorburn had more than once tried to cultivate acquaintance with him, as they were constantly brought into outward contact; but the Corporal was a Tory, and more than suspected the smith of holding "Radical" sentiments. To defend things as they were was a point of honour with the pensioner—a religion. Besides, any opposition to the Government seemed a slight upon the army, and therefore upon himself. Thorburn at last avoided him, and pronounced him to be proud and ignorant. But one day "wee Davie" found his way into the Corporal's house, and putting his hands on his knees as he was reading the newspaper near the window, looked up to his face. The old soldier was arrested by the beauty of the child, and took him on his knee. To his surprise, Davie did not scream; and when his mother soon followed in search of her boy, and made many apologies for his "impudence," as she called it, the Corporal maintained that he was a jewel, a perfect gentle-

man, and dubbed him "the Captain." Next day, tapping at Thorburn's door, the Corporal gracefully presented toys in the shape of a small sword and drum for his young hero. That same night he smoked his pipe at the smith's fireside, and told such stories of his battles as fired the smith's enthusiasm, called forth his praises, and, what was more substantial, procured a most comfortable tea, which clinched their friendly intercourse. He and "the Captain" became constant associates, and many a loud laugh might be heard from the Corporal's room as he played with the boy, and educated his genius. "He makes me young again, does the Captain!" the Corporal often remarked to the mother.

Mrs Fergusson, another neighbour, was also drawn into the same friendly net by wee Davie. She was a fussy, gossiping woman, noisy and disagreeable. Jeanie avoided her, and boasted indeed that it was her rule to "keep hersel to hersel," instead of giving away some of her good self to her neighbour, and thus taking some of her neighbour's bad self out of her. But her youngest child became seriously ill, and Jeanie thought, "If Davie were ill I would like a neighbour to speir for him." So she went up stairs to visit Mrs Fergusson, "begged pardon," but "wished to know how Mary was." Mrs Fergusson, bowed down with sorrow, thanked her, and bid her "come ben." Jeanie did so, and spoke kindly to the child—told her mother, moreover, what pleasure it would give her to nurse her baby occasionally, and invited the younger children to come down to her house and play with wee Davie, so as to keep the sick one quiet. She helped also to cook some nourishing drinks, and got nice milk from her father for Mary, often excusing herself for apparent "meddling" by saying, "When

ane has a bairn o' their ain, they canna but feel for other folk's bairns." Mrs Fergusson's heart became subdued, softened, and friendly. "We took it as extraordinary kind," she more than once remarked, "in Mrs Thorburn to do as she has done. It is a blessing to have sic a neighbour." But it was wee Davie who was the peacemaker!

The street in which the smith lived was as uninteresting as any could be. A description of its outs and ins would have made a "social science" meeting shudder. Beauty or even neatness it had not. Every "close" or "entry" in it looked like a sepulchre. The back courts were a huddled confusion of outhouses; strings of linens drying; stray dogs searching for food; hens and pigeons similarly employed with more apparent success and satisfaction; lean cats creeping about; crowds of children, laughing, shouting, and muddy to the eyes, acting with intense glee the great dramas of life, marriages, batties, deaths, and burials, with castle-building, extensive farming, and various commercial operations: but everywhere smoke, mud, moisture, and an utterly uncomfortable look. And so long as we, in Scotland, have a western ocean to afford an unlimited supply of water; and western mountains to condense it as it passes in the blue air over their summits; and western winds to waft it to our cities; and so long as it will pour down, and be welcomed by smoke above, and earth below, we shall find it difficult to be "neat and tidy about the doors," or to transport the cleanliness of England into our streets and lanes. But, in spite of all this, how many cheerful homes, with bright fires and nice furniture, inhabited by intelligent, sober, happy men and women, with healthy, lively children, are everywhere to be found in those very



streets, which seem to the eye of those who have never penetrated further than their outside, to be "dreadful places."

A happier home could hardly be found than that of William Thorburn, as he sat at the fireside, after returning from his work, reading his newspaper, or some book of weightier literature, selected by Jeanie from the well-filled shelves in the little back parlour, while Jeanie herself was sewing opposite to him. As it often happened, both were absorbed in the rays of that bright light, "wee Davie," which filled their dwelling, and the whole world, to their eyes ; or both listened to the grand concert of his nappy voice, which mingled with their busy work and silent thoughts, giving harmony to all. How much was done for his sake ! He was the most sensible, efficient, and thoroughly philosophical teacher of household economy and of social science in all its departments who could enter a working man's dwelling !

## CHAPTER II.

My heart is sore as I write it ; but wee Davie got ill.

He began to refuse his food, and nothing would please him. He became peevish and cross, so that he would hardly go to his father, except to kiss him with tearful cheeks, and then to stretch out his hands with a cry for his mother. His mother nursed him on her knee, rocked him, walked with him, sang to him her own household lullabies ; put him to bed, lifted him up, laid him down, and "fought" with him day and night, caring for neither food nor sleep, but only for her child's ease and comfort.

What lessons of self-sacrificing love was she thus unconsciously taught by her little sufferer ! Such lessons, indeed, as earth alone can afford—and so far it is a glorious school ; for there are no sickbeds to watch, no sufferers to soothe, nor mourners to comfort, among the many mansions of our Father's house.

The physician, who was at last called in, pronounced it "a bad case—a *very* serious case." I forget the specific nature of the illness. The idea of danger to Davie had never entered the minds of his parents. The day on which William realised it, he was, as his fellow-workmen expressed it, "clean stupid." They saw him make mistakes he had never made before, and knew it could not be from "drink," yet could not guess the cause. "I maun gang hame !" was his only explana-

tion, when, at three o'clock, he put on his coat and stalked out of the smithy, like one utterly indifferent as to what the consequences might be to ploughs or harrows, wheels or horse-shoes. Taking an old fellow-workman aside, he whispered to him, "For auld friendship sake, Tam, tak charge this day o' my wark." He said no more. "What ails Willy?" asked his fellow-workmen in vain, as they all paused for a moment at their work and looked perplexed.

It was on the afternoon of the next day that "the minister" called. It must here be confessed that William was a rare attender of any church. The fact was, he had been hitherto rather sceptical in his tendencies: not that his doubts had ever assumed a systematic form, or were ever expressed in any determined or dogmatic manner; but he had read Tom Paine, associated the political rights of man with rebellion against old authorities, all of whom he thought had tyrannically denied them; and he had imbibed the idea at the old "philosophical" club, that ministers, especially those of the Established Church, were the enemies of all progress, had no sympathy with the working classes, were slaves to the aristocracy, preached as a mere profession and only for their pay, and had, moreover, a large share of hypocrisy and humbug in them. The visit of Dr M'Gavin was, therefore, very unexpected.

When the Dr entered the house, after a courteous request to be allowed to do so,—as it was always his principle that the poorest man was entitled to the same respect as the man of rank or riches,—he said, "I have just heard from some of your neighbours, whom I have been visiting, that your child is seriously unwell, and I

thought you would excuse my calling upon you to inquire for him."

William made him welcome, and begged him to be seated. The call was specially acceptable to Jeanie. Old David, I should have mentioned, was "an elder" in a most worthy dissenting congregation, and his strong religious convictions and church views formed in his mind a chief objection to the marriage of his daughter with a man "who was not," as he said, "even a member of any kirk." Jeanie had often wished her husband to be more decided in what she herself cordially acknowledged to be a duty, and felt to be a comfort and a privilege. The visit of the Dr, whose character was well known and much esteemed, was therefore peculiarly welcome to her.

In a little while the Dr was standing beside the cot of wee Davie, who was asleep, and gently touching the little sufferer's hand, he said, in a quiet voice, to the smith, "My friend, I sincerely feel for you! I am myself a father, and have suffered losses in my family." At the word *losses*, William winced, and moved from his place as if he felt uneasy. The Dr quickly perceived it, and said, "I do not, of course, mean to express so rash and unkind an opinion as that you are to lose this very beautiful and interesting boy, but only to assure you how I am enabled from experience to understand your anxiety, and to sympathise with you and your wife." And noiselessly walking to the arm-chair near the fire, he there sat down, while William and Jeanie sat near him.

After hearing with patience and attention the account from Jeanie of the beginning and progress of the child's disease, he said, "Whatever happens, it is a comfort to

know that our Father is acquainted with all you suffer, all you fear, and all you wish ; and that Jesus Christ, our Brother, has a fellow-feeling with us in all our infirmities and trials."

"The Deity must know all," said William, with a softened voice ; "He is infinitely great and incomprehensible."

"Yes," replied the minister ; "God is so great, that He can attend to our smallest concerns ; yet not so incomprehensible but that a father's heart can truly feel after Him, so as at least to find Him through His Son. Oh ! what a comfort and strength the thought is to all men," continued the Dr, "and ought to be to working men, and to you parents, especially with your dear child in sickness, that He who marks a sparrow fall, smitten by winter's cold, and who feeds the wild beasts, is acquainted with us, with our most secret affairs, so that even the hairs of our heads are numbered ; that He who is the Father, almighty Maker of the heavens and the earth, knows the things which we need ; that He has in us, individually, an interest which is incomprehensible, only because His love to us is so in its depth, for He so loved us that He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up to death for us all ! It is this God who considers each of us, and weighs all His dealings towards us with a carefulness as great as if we alone existed in His universe, so that, as a father pitieth his children, He pitieth us, knowing our frames, and remembering that we are dust."

William bent his head, and was silent, while Jeanie listened with her whole soul. "It is not easy, minister," he at last said, "for hard-wrought and tired men to believe that."



"Nor for any man," replied the Dr. "I find it very difficult to believe it myself as a real thing, yet I know it to be true; and," he continued, in a low and affectionate voice, "perhaps we never could have known it or believed it at all, unless God had taught it to us by the life of His own Son, who came to reveal a Father. But as I see *Him* taking up little children into His loving arms, when others would keep them away who did not understand what perfect love is, and as I see in such doings how love cannot but come down and meet the wants of its smallest and weakest object—when I see all this love at last expressed in the giving up of His life for *sinners*, oh! it is then I learn in what consists the real greatness of God, 'whose name is Love.'"

"I believe wi' my heart," remarked the smith, "that no man ever loved as Jesus Christ did."

"But," said the Dr, "I see in this love of Christ more than the love of a good man merely; I see revealed in it the loving tenderness towards us and ours of that God whom no eye hath seen or can see, but whom the eye of the spirit, when taught of God, can perceive; for, as Jesus said, 'He who seeth *me*, seeth the Father!'"

"I believe a' ye say, Dr," said Jeanie, meekly. "I wadna like to keep my bairn frae Him, nor to rebel against His will, for it's aye richt; but, O sir, I hope, I hope, He will lift him up, and help us now as He did many distressed ones while on earth, by sparing ane that's just like a pairt o' our ain hearts!"

"I hope," said the minister, "God will spare your boy. But you must trust Him, sincerely ask Him so to do, and commit your child into His hands without fear, and acquiesce in His doing towards you and your boy as He pleases."

"That is hard!" remarked William.

"Hard!" mildly replied the Dr. "What would you choose else, had you the power of doing so, rather than acquiesce in the will of God? Would you trust your own heart, for instance, more than the heart of God? or, tell me, would you rather have your child's fate decided by any other on earth than by yourself?"

"No, for I know how I love the boy," was Jeanie's reply.

"But God loves him much more than you do; for he belongs to God, and was made by Him and for Him."

"I ken I am a waik woman, Dr, but I frankly say that I canna, no, I canna thole the thocht o' parting wi' him!" said Jeanie, clasping her hands tightly.

"May God spare him to you, my friends!" replied the minister, "if it be for your good and his. But," he added, "there are worse things than death."

This remark, made in almost an under-voice, was followed by silence for a few moments. The minister's eyes were cast down as if in meditation or prayer.

"Death is hard enough," said the smith.

"But hard chiefly as a sign of something worse," continued the Dr. "Pardon me for asking you such questions as these:—What if your child grew up an enemy to you? What if he never returned your love? What if he never would trust you? What if he never would speak to you? What if he always disobeyed you? Would this not bring down your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave?"

"Eh! sir," said Jeanie, "that *would* be waur than death!"

"But excuse me, Dr, for just remarking," interrupted

William, "that I never knew any child with a good parent, who would so act. I really don't think it possible that our ain wee Davie, even with our poor bringing up, would ever come to *that*. It would be so unnatural."

"God alone knows how that might be, Thorburn," said the Dr. "But there are many things more unnatural and dreadful even than that in this world. Listen to me kindly ; for I sincerely thank you for having allowed one who is a stranger to speak so frankly to you, and for having heard me with such considerate patience."

"Oh, gang on, gang on, sir, I like to hear you," said Jeanie.

"Certainly," added the smith.

"Well, then," said the minister, "I have no wish even to appear to find any fault with you at such a time. I am more disposed, believe me, to weep with you in your sorrow than to search your heart or life for sin. But I feel at such solemn times as these, most solemn to you and to your wife, that the voice of a Father is speaking to you in the rod, and it ought to be heard ; that His hand is ministering discipline to you, and that you ought to give Him reverence, and be in subjection to the Father of our spirits that you may live. In order, therefore, that you may receive more strength and comfort in the end, let me beseech of you to consider candidly, after I leave you, whether you have perhaps not been acting towards *your* Father in heaven in that very way which, did your child grow up and act towards *you*, would be reckoned by you both as a sorrow worse than death ?"

"How could that be !" asked Jeanie, with a timid and inquiring look.

"You may discover *how*, my friends, if you honestly ask yourselves, Whether you have loved God your Father who has so loved you? Has there been cordial friendship, or the reverse, towards Him? Confidence, or distrust? Disobedience, or rebellion? Communion in frank, believing, and affectionate prayer, or distant silence? I do not wish any reply to such questions now; but I desire you and myself, as loving fathers of our children, to ask whether we have felt and acted towards the best and most loving of Fathers, as we wish our children to feel and act towards ourselves?"

The Dr paused for a moment. Jeanie shook her head slowly, and the smith stared with her at the fire.

"By the grace of God," said Jeanie, in a whisper, "I hope I have."

"I hope so too," replied the minister, "but it does not come naturally to us."

"It's a fact," ejaculated the smith, thrusting his hands vehemently into his pockets; "it does *not* come naturally, in whatever way it comes, and yet it's desperate unnatural the want o't."

"Yes, Thorburn," replied the Dr, "it is very dreadful, but yet we have all sinned, and this is our sin of sins, that we have *not known nor loved our Father*, but have been forgetful of Him, strange, shy to Him; we have every one of us been cold, heartless, prodigal, disobedient children!"

Another short pause, and he then spoke on in the same quiet and loving voice: "But whatever we are or have been, let us hope in God through Jesus Christ, or we perish! Every sinner is righteously doomed, but no man is doomed to be a sinner. God is our Father still, for He is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not

imputing unto men their trespasses ; and just as you both have nourished and cherished your dear boy, and have been loving him when he knew it not, nor could understand that great love in your hearts, which, sure am I, will never grow cold but in the grave, so has it been with God toward us. Open your hearts to His love, as you would open your eyes to the light which has been ever shining. Believe it as the grand reality, as you would have your boy open his heart to and believe in your own love, when he awakens from his sleep. Your love, as I have said, is deep, real to your boy, irrespective of his knowledge or return of it. But what is this to the love of God ! ‘*Here-in* is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.’ Let us, my friends, never rest till we are enabled in some degree to see and to appreciate such marvellous goodness, and to say, ‘We have known and believed the love which God has to us.’”

“Dr M’Gavin,” said William, “you have spoken to me as no man ever did before, and you will believe me, I am sure, when I say, that I respect you and myself too much to flatter you. But there is surely a meaning in my love to that boy which I never saw before ! It begins to glimmer on me.”

“Thank God if it does ! But I do not speak to you, and this you must give me credit for, as if it were my profession only ; I speak to you as a man, a father, and a brother, wishing you to share the good which God has given to me, and wishes you and all men to share. So I repeat it, that if we would only cherish towards God that simple confidence and hearty love—and seek to enjoy with Him that frank, cheerful communion which we wish our children to possess in relation to ourselves,



we would experience a true regeneration, the important change from an estranged heart to a child's love."

"That would, indeed, be a Christianity worth having," said William.

"It would be," continued the Dr, "to share Christ's life; for what was the whole life of Jesus Christ, but a life of this blessed, confiding, obedient, childlike sonship? Oh that we would learn of Him, and grow up in likeness to Him! But this ignorance of God is itself death. For if knowledge be life, spiritual ignorance is death. My good friends, I have been led to give you a regular sermon!" said the Dr, smiling; "but I really cannot help it. To use common, everyday language, I think our treatment of God has been shameful, unjust, and disgraceful on the part of men with reason, conscience, and heart! I do not express myself half so strongly as I feel. I am ashamed and disgusted with myself, and all the members of the human family, for what we feel, and feel *not*, to such a Father. If it were not for what the one elder Brother was and did, the whole family would have been disgraced and ruined most righteously. But His is the name, and there is no other whereby we can be saved!"

"Dr," said William, with a trembling voice, "the mind is dark, and the heart is hard!"

"The Spirit of God who is given with Christ can enlighten and soften both, my brother."

"Thank ye, thank ye, from my heart," replied the smith; "I confess I have been very careless in going to the church, but——"

"We may talk of that again, if you allow me to return to-morrow. Yet," said the Dr, pointing to the child, "God in His mercy never leaves Himself without a

witness. Look at your child, and listen to your own heart, and remember all I have said, and you will perhaps discover that though you tried it you could not fly from the word of the Lord, should you even have fled from the Bible. A Father's voice by a child has been preaching to you. Yes, Thorburn ! when in love God gave you that child, He sent an eloquent missionary to your house to preach the gospel of what our Father is to us, and what we as children ought to be to Him. Only listen to that sermon, and you will soon be prepared to listen to others."

The Dr rose to depart. Before doing so, he asked permission to pray, which was cheerfully granted. Wishing to strengthen the faith, in prayer, of those sufferers, he first said, "If God *cannot* hear and answer prayer, He is not all-perfect and supreme ; if He *will* not, He is not our Father. But, blessed be His name, His own Son, who knew Him perfectly, prayed Himself, and was heard in that He prayed. He heard, too, every true prayer addressed to Himself ; while He has in His kindness furnished us with an argument for prayer, the truth and beauty of which we parents can of all men most appreciate: 'Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you : for every one that asketh, receiveth ; and he that seeketh, findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give a stone ? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him !'"

The Dr then poured forth a simple, loving, and most

sympathising prayer, in which he made himself one with his fellow-worshippers, and expressed to a common Father the anguish and the hopes of the hearts around him. When it ended, he went to the cot, and looked at the sleeping child, touched his white hand, and said, "God bless your little one! May this sleep be for health."

"It's the first sleep," said Jeanie, "he has had for a lang time. It may be a turn in his complaint."

The minister then shook them both warmly by the hand, and gazed on them with a world of interest in his eyes, asking them only to consider kindly what he had said.

The silence which ensued for a few minutes after his absence, as William and Jeanie returned from the door and stood beside the bed, was broken by the smith observing, "I am glad that man came to our house, Jeanie. Yon was indeed preaching that a man can understand and canna forget. It was wee Davie did it."

"That's true," said Jeanie; "thank God for't!" And after gazing on the sleeping child, she added, "Is he no bonnie? I dinna wunnar that sic a bairn should bring guid to the house."

That night William had thoughts in his heart which burned with a redder glow than the coals upon the smithy fire!

### CHAPTER III.

IT was a beautiful morning in spring, with blue sky, living air, springing grass, and singing birds ; but William Thorburn had not left his house, and the door was shut.

Mrs Fergusson trod the wooden stair that led to the floor above with slow and cautious step ; and as she met her boy running down whistling, she said, " What d'ye mean, Jamie, wi' that noise ? Do ye no ken wee Davie is dead ? Ye should hae mair feeling, laddie ! "

The Corporal, whose door was half-open, crept out, and in an under-breath beckoned Mrs Fergusson to speak to him. " Do you know how they are ? " he asked, in a low voice.

" No," she replied, shaking her head. " I sat up wi' Mrs Thorburn half the night, and left Davie sleeping, and never thocht it would come to this. My heart is sair for them. But since it happened the door has been barred, and no one has been in. I somehow dinna like to intrude, for nae doot, they will be in an awfu' way aboot that bairn."

" I don't wonder,—I don't wonder ! " remarked the Corporal, meditatively ; " I did not believe I could feel as I do. I don't understand it. Here am I, who have seen men killed by my side ;—who have seen a few shots cut down almost half our company ; and——"

" Is it possible ! " interposed Mrs Fergusson.

"It is certain," said the Corporal ; " and I have charged at Pampeluna—it was there I was wounded—over dead and dying comrades, yet, will you believe me ? I never shed a tear—never ; but there was something in that Captain—I mean the boy—" and the Corporal took out his snuff-box, and snuffed vehemently. " And what a brave fellow his father is ! I never thought I could love a Radical ; but he is not what you call a Radical ; he is—I don't know what else, but he is a man—an out-and-out man, every inch of him, I'll say that for him—a man in William Thorburn ! Have you not seen his wife ? "

" No, poor body ! It was six o'clock when she ran up to me, no distracted either, but awfu' quiet like, and wakened me up, and just said, ' He's awa ! ' and then afore I could speak she ran doon the stair, and steekit her door ; and she has such a keen spirit, I dinna like to gang to bother her. I'm unco wae for them."

They were both silent, as if listening for some sound in William Thorburn's house, but all was still as the grave.

The first who entered that morning were old David Armstrong and his wife. They found Jeanie busy about her house, and William sitting on a chair, dressed better than usual, staring into the fire. The curtains of the bed were up. It was covered with a pure white sheet, and something lay upon it which they recognised.

Jeanie came forward, and took the hand of father and mother, without a tear on her face, and said quietly, " Come ben," as she gave her father a chair beside her husband, and led her mother into an inner room, closing the door. What was spoken there between them, I know not.

William rose to receive old David, and remarked, in a careless manner, that " it was a fine spring day."



David gave a warm squeeze to his hand, and sat down. He soon rose and went to the bed. William followed him, and took the cloth off the boy's face in silence. The face was unchanged, as in sleep. The flaxen curls seemed to have been carefully arranged, for they escaped from under the white cap, and clustered like golden wreaths around the marble forehead and cheeks. William covered up the face, and both returned to their seats by the fireside.

"I never lost ane since my ain wee Davie dee'd, and yours, Willie, was dear to me as my ain," exclaimed the old man, and then broke down, and sobbed like a child.

William never moved, though his great chest seemed to heave; but he seized the poker, and began to arrange the fire, and then was still as before.

By and by, the door of the inner room opened, and Jeanie and her mother appeared, both of them composed and calm. The same scene was repeated as they passed the bed. Mrs Armstrong then seated herself beside her husband.

Jeanie placing a large Bible on the table, pointed to it, and said, "Father." She then drew her chair near the smith's.

David Armstrong put on his spectacles, opened the Bible, and selecting a portion of Scripture, reverently said, "Let us read the Word of God." The house was quiet. No business on that day intruded itself upon their minds. It was difficult for any of them to speak, but they were willing to hear. The passages which old David selected for reading were 2 Samuel xii. 15-23, on the sorrow of King David when he lost his child; Matthew ix. 18-26, containing the history of the raising up

of the daughter of Jairus; and John xi. 1-44, with its memorable narrative of the darkness of mysterious sorrow, and the light of unexpected deliverance experienced by Martha and Mary of Bethany.

Having closed the Book, he said, with a trembling but solemn voice, "God, who doeth all things according to the counsel of His own will, has been pleased to send us a heavy affliction. 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away!' May He enable us to say at all times, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.' For whether He gives or takes away, He is always the same in love and mercy towards us, and therefore ought to have the same confidence from us. In truth, if He takes away, it is but to give something better, for He afflicts us in order to make us *partakers* of His holiness. Our little one is not dead, but only sleepeth!"

Here David paused, but recovering himself, said, "Yes, his body sleepeth in Jesus till the resurrection morning. He himself is with Christ. He is alive, in his Father's bosom. Oh, it is strange to think o't, and hard to believe! but, blessed be God! it's true, that—that—Jesus Christ, who sees us, sees him, and sees us together, ay, at this vera moment!—" continued David, thoughtfully, like one pondering on a new truth; "this very moment we are all in His sight! Oh, it's grand and comforting; our wee Davie is in the arms of Jesus Christ!"

A solemn silence ensued. "The bonnie bairn will never return to us," continued the elder, "but we shall go to him, and some o' us ere lang, I hope. Let us pray." And they all knelt down, and a true prayer was spoken from suffering parents, to Him "of whom *the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*"

To David's surprise and great satisfaction, he heard William utter Amen to his prayer, which included honest confession of sin ; expressions of thankfulness for mercies, amongst others, for the great gift of their child, thus taken away, for all he had been, and for all he then was ; with trustful petitions for the forgiveness of sin, and grace to help in this their time of need.

That afternoon Dr M'Gavin called, and manifested quiet, unobtrusive, but most touching sympathy. His very silence was eloquent affection.

"I'm proud to meet wi' you, sir," said old Armstrong, after the Dr had been seated for a while. "Altho' I'm no o' your kirk, yet we're baith o' ae kirk for a' that."

"With one Father, one Brother, one Spirit, one life, one love, one hope!" replied the Dr.

"True, sir, true, our differences are nothing to our agreements."

"Our non-essential differences arise out of our essential union, Mr Armstrong. For if we differ honestly and conscientiously as brethren, I hope it is because we differ only in judgment as to *how* to please our Father, and our elder Brother. Our hearts are one in our wish to do their will. For none of us liveth or even dieth to himself."

"Ay, ay, sir. So it is, so it is! But as the auld saying has't, 'The best o' men are but men at the best.' We maun carry ane another's burdens ; and ignorance, or even bigotry, is the heaviest ony man can carry for his neebour. Thank God, however, that brighter and better times are coming! We here see thro' a glass darkly ; but then face to face. We know only in part, then shall we know even as we are known. In the

meantime, we must be faithful to our given light, and, according to the best o' our fallible judgment, serve Him, and not man."

"There are differences among living men," replied the minister, "but none among the dead. We shall agree perfectly only when we know and love as saints, without error and without sin."

"I mind," said David, warming with the conversation, and the pleasure of getting his better heart out—"I mind twa neighbours o' ours, and ye'll mind them, too, gude-wife? that was Johnnie Morton and auld Andrew Gebbie. The tane was a keen Burgher, and the t'ither an Anti-burgher. Baith lived in the same house, tho' at different ends, and it was the bargain that each should keep his ain side o' the house aye weel thatched. But they happened to dispute so keenly about the principles o' their kirks, that at last they quarrelled, and didna speak at a'! So ae day after this, as they were on the roof thatching, each on his ain side, they reached the tap, and looking ower, face met face. What could they do? They couldna flee. So at last, Andrew took aff his Kilmarnock cap, and scratching his head, said, 'Johnnie, you and me, I think, hae been very foolish to dispute as we hae done concerning Christ's will aboot our kirks, until we hae clean forgot His will aboot ourselves; and so we hae fought sae bitterly for what we ca' the truth, that it has ended in spite. Whatever's wrang, it's perfectly certain that it never can be richt to be uncivil, unneighbourly, unkind, in fac, tae hate ane anither. Na, na, that's the deevil's wark, and no God's! Noo, it strikes me that maybe it's wi' the kirk as wi' this house: ye're working on ae side and me on the t'ither, but if we only

do our wark weel, we will meet at the tap at last. Gie's your han', auld neighbour!' And so they shook han's, and were the best o' freens ever after."

"Thank you, Mr Armstrong, for the story," said Dr M'Gavin. Then looking to the bed, he remarked, "Oh, if we were only simple, true, and loving, like little children, would we not, like that dear one, enter the kingdom of heaven, and know and love all who were in it, or on their way to it?"

"I'm glad I have met you, sir," resumed the old Elder. "It does ane's heart good to meet a brother who has been a stranger. But if it hadna been for *his* death, we might never have met! Isna that queer? God's ways are no our ways!"

"God brings life to our hearts out of death," replied the Dr, "and in many ways does He ordain praise from babes and sucklings, whether living or dead."

And thus a quiet chat, full of genial Christian cheerfulness, was kept up for a time round the fireside. There was light in that dwelling on many a question, for there was love—love intensified by sorrow, as the last rays of evening become more glorious from the very clouds that gather round the setting sun.

"With your permission, good friends," said Dr M'Gavin, "I will read a short psalm and offer up a short prayer before I go." He selected the 23d. His only remark, as he closed the Bible, was, "The good Shepherd has been pleased to take this dear lamb into His fold, never more to leave it."

"And may the lamb be the means of making the auld sheep to follow!" added the Elder.

When the prayer was over, Jeanie, who had hardly

spoken a word, said, without looking at the Dr, "O sir! God didna hear our prayer for my bairn!"

"Dinna speak that way, Jeanie, woman!" said her mother, softly, yet firmly.

"I canna help it, mither; I maun get oot my thochts that are burning at my heart. The minister maun forgie me," replied Jeanie.

"Surely, Mrs Thorburn," said the Dr; "and it would be a great satisfaction to me were I able, from what God has taught myself in His Word, and from my own experience of sorrow, to solve any difficulty, or help you to acquiesce in God's dealings with you; not because you *must*, but because you *ought* to submit; and that again, not because God has *power*, and therefore does what He pleases, but because He is love, and therefore pleases always to do what is right."

"But, oh, He didna hear our prayer: that's my burthen! But we were maybe wrang in asking what was against His will."

"He did not answer you in the way, perhaps, in which you expected, Mrs Thorburn; yet, depend upon it, every true prayer is heard and answered by Him. But He is too good, too wise, too loving, to give us always literally what we ask; if so, He would often be very cruel, and *that* He can never be! You would not give your child a serpent, if in his ignorance he asked one, mistaking it for a fish? nor would you give him a stone for bread?"

Jeanie was silent.

"When Nathan, the Lord's prophet, telt King David that his child must die," said the Elder, "yet nevertheless David even then, when it seemed almost rebellion,



prayed to the Lord to spare his life, and I dinna doot that his Father in heaven was pleased wi' his freedom and faith. He couldna but tak kindly such confidence frae His distressed servant."

"I am sure," said the Dr, "we cannot trust Him too much, or open our human hearts to Him too freely. But let us always remember, that when God refuses what we ask, He gives us something else far better, yea, and does far more than we can ask or think. So it may be thus with regard to your dear child. If He has taken him away, can you, for example, tell the good He has bestowed thereby on himself or others, or the evil and misery which He has thereby prevented? Oh, how many parents would give worlds that their children had died in infancy!"

"We are ignorant creatures!" exclaimed William.

"And consider further, Mrs Thorburn," said the Dr, "how the Apostle Paul prayed the Lord thrice to have a thorn in the flesh—a very messenger from Satan—removed. But the Lord did not hear even *his* prayer in his way, but answered it, nevertheless, in another and better way, when He said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is perfected in weakness.'"

"True, minister," said the Elder, "nor did He ever say, 'Seek ye my face in vain.'"

"And as regards your dear child, Mrs Thorburn," continued the Dr, touching her arm, and speaking with great earnestness, "I believe sorrow's crown of sorrow to a Christian parent, and the heaviest he or she can endure on earth, is that of seeing a child, dearer than their own life, living and dying in wickedness! What was David's sorrow for his dead babe, when compared with that wail of bitter agony for his wicked son,

'Would God I had died for thee, O Absolom, my son, my son!' God has saved *you* from that agony. He has done so by taking your child to Himself. Your precious jewel is not lost, but is in God's treasury, where no thief can break through and steal: *that* is surely something!"

"Something!" exclaimed the smith; "it is surely, after all, everything. And yet——"

"And yet," said Jeanie, as if interpreting the feeling of her husband, "wi' a' these blessed thochts about our wee bairn, he's an awfu' blank! Ilka thing in the world seems different."

"I'm just thinking, Jeanie," said her mother, "that it's a comfort ye ever pat yer een on Davie; for there's puir Mrs Blair (John Blair's blin' wife, ye ken) when she lost her callant, May was a year, she cam to me in an awfu' way aboot it, and said that what vexed her sae muckle was, that she never had seen his wee face, and could only touch and han'le him, and hear him greet, but never get a look o' him."

"Puir body," remarked Jeanie, "it was a sair misfortune' for ony mither that! Ilka ane has their ain burden to carry. But, minister, let me speir at you, sir: Will I never see my bairn again? and if I see him, will I no ken him?"

"You might as well ask me whether you could see and know your child if he had gone to a foreign country instead of to heaven," replied the Dr. "Alas for Christian love, if we did not know our beloved friends in heaven! But such ignorance is not possible in that home of light and love."

"It wadna be rational to think so," remarked William. "And yet, Dr," he continued, "excuse me for just say-

ing, though I would rather listen than speak, that the knowledge of the lost, if such knowledge there can be, must be terrible !”

“I know not how that will be,” replied the Dr, “though I have my own views on it. Yet surely our ignorance of any person being lost would be dearly purchased by our ignorance of any person being saved ?”

“I did not think of that,” said the smith.

“But,” continued Jeanie, with quiet earnestness, “will our bairn aye be a bairn, Dr ? Oh, I hope so !”

“Dinna try, Jeanie dear,” said David, “to be wise aboon what is written.”

The Dr smiled, and asked,—“If your child had lived, think you, would you have rejoiced had he always continued to be a child, and never grown or advanced ? and are you a loss or a gain to your father and mother, because you have grown in mind and knowledge since you were an infant ?”

“I never thocht o’ that either,” said Jeanie, thoughtfully.

“Be assured,” continued the minister, “there will be no such imperfect and incomplete beings there as infants in intellect and in sense for ever. All will be perfect and complete, according to the plan of God, who made us for fellowship with Himself and with all His blissful family. Your darling has gone to a noble school, and will be taught and trained there for immortality, by Him who was Himself a child, who spoke as a child, reasoned as a child, and as a child ‘grew in wisdom and in stature ;’ and who also sympathised with a mother’s love and a mother’s sorrow. You too, parents, if you believe in Christ, and hold fast your confidence in Him, and become to Him as little children, will be made fit to enter

the same society ; and thus you and your boy, though never, perhaps, forgetting your old relationship on earth, will be fit companions for one another, for ever and for ever. Depend upon it, you will both know and love each other there better than you ever could possibly have done here !”

“My wee pet !” murmured Jeanie, as the tears began to flow from a softened, because happier, heart.

William hid his face in his hands. After a while, he broke silence, and said, “These thoughts of heaven are new to me. But common sense tells me they maun be true. Heaven does not seem to me noo to be the same strange place it used to be. My loss is not so complete as I once thought it was. Neither we nor our bairn have lived in vain.”

“Surely not,” said the Dr ;

“ ‘Better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all !’

You have contributed one citizen to the heavenly Jerusalem ; one member to the family above ; one happy spirit to add his voice to the anthem before the throne of God !”

“Lord, help our unbelief !” said Mr Armstrong ; “for the mair I think o’ the things which I believe, the mair they seem to me owre gude news to be true !”

“The disciples, when they first saw Christ after His resurrection,” said the minister, “did not believe from very joy.”

“We think owre muckle o’ our ain folk, Dr, and owre little o’ Him,” remarked the Elder. “But it’s a comfort that He’s kent and loved as He ought to be by them in heaven. I thank Him, alang wi’ them that’s awa’, for all He is and gies to them noo in His presence.”

"And for all He is and does, and will ever be and do to every man who trusts Him," added the Dr; "our friends would be grieved, if grief were possible to them now, did they think our memory of them made us forget Him, or that our love to them made us love Him less. Surely, if they know what we are doing, they would rejoice if they also knew that, along with themselves, we too rejoiced in their God and our God. What child in heaven but would be glad to know that its parents joined with it every day in offering up, through the same Spirit, the same prayer of '*Our Father!*'"

"If wee Davie could preach to us, I daresay, sir, that micht be his text," said the Elder.

"Though dead, he yet speaketh," replied the minister.

The Dr rose to depart. "By the by," he said, "let me repeat a verse or two to you, Thorburn, which I am sure you will like. They express the thoughts of a parent about his dead girl, which have already in part been poorly expressed by me when your wife asked me if she would know her boy:—

'She is not dead—the child of our affection,  
But gone into that school  
Where she no longer needs our poor protection,  
And Christ himself doth rule.

'Not as a child shall we again behold her;  
For when with raptures wild  
In our embraces we again enfold her,  
She will not be a child;

'But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion  
Clothed with celestial grace,  
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion  
Shall we behold her face.'

"Thank ye, sir, thank ye," said Thorburn; "and ye'll no be offended if I ax ye to gie me a grip o' yer han'."

And the smith laid hold of the Doctor's proffered hand, so small and white, with his own hand, so large and powerful,—“God reward ye, sir, for we canna! And noo, minister,” the smith continued, “I maun oot wi't! Since ye hae been so kind as gie us that fine bit o' English poetry, I canna help gieing you a bit o' Scotch, for Scotch poetry has been a favourite reading o' mine, and there's a verse that has been dirling a' day in my heart. This is it :—

‘It's dowie at the hint o' hairst,  
At the wa'-gang o' the swallow,  
When the winds blaw cauld,  
And the burns run bauld,  
And the wuds are hanging yellow;  
But oh! it's dowie far to see  
The wa'-gang o' ane the heart gangs wi',  
The dead set o' a shining e'e,  
That closes the weary warld on thee!’

Fareweel, sir! I'll expect ye the morn at two, if convenient,” the smith whispered to the Dr, as he opened the door to him.

“I'll be sure to come,” he replied. “Thank you for those verses; and think for your good about all I have said.”

That evening, after Dr M'Gavin's visit, there was a comfortable tea prepared by Jeanie for her friends, and the Corporal was one of the party.

There is a merciful reaction to strong feeling. The highest waves, when they dash against the rock, flow furthest back, and scatter themselves in their rebound into sparkling foam and airy bubbles.

The Corporal told some of his old stories of weariness and famine, of wounds and sufferings, of marches and retreats, of battles and victories, over the fields of Spain. Old Armstrong could match these only by Covenanter



tales, of fights long ago, from "The Scots Worthies," but was astonished to find the Corporal a stanch Episcopalian, who had no sympathy with "rebels." Yet so kind and courteous was the pensioner, that the Elder confessed that he was "a real fine boddie, without a grain o' bigotry." Jeanie and her mother spoke of the farm, of the cows, and of old friends among the servants, with many bygone reminiscences. And thus the weight of their spirits was lightened, although ever and anon there came one little presence before them, causing a sinking of the heart!

No sooner had their friends left the house for the night than the smith did what he never did before. He opened the Bible, and said to Jeanie, "I will read a chapter aloud before we retire to rest." Jeanie clapped her husband fondly on the shoulder, and in silence sat down beside him while he read again some of the same passages which they had already heard. Few houses had that night more quiet and peaceful sleepers.

The little black coffin was brought to the smith's the night before the funeral. When the house was quiet, Davie was laid in it gently by his father. Jeanie assumed the duty of arranging with care the white garments in which her boy was dressed, wrapping them round him, and adjusting the head as if to sleep in her own bosom. She brushed once more the golden ringlets, and put the little hands across the breast, and opened out the frills in the cap, and removed every particle of sawdust which soiled the shroud. When all was finished, though she seemed anxious to prolong the work, the lid was put on the coffin, yet so as to leave the face uncovered. Both were as silent as their child. But ere

they retired to rest for the night, they instinctively went to take another look.

As they thus gazed in silence, side by side, the smith felt his hand gently seized by his wife. She played at first nervously with the fingers, until finding her own hand held by her husband, she looked into his face with an unutterable expression, and meeting his eyes so full of unobtrusive sorrow, leant her head on his shoulder and said, "Willie, this is my last look o' him on this side o' the grave. But Willie, dear, you and me maun see him again, and, mind ye, no to part;—na, I canna thole that! We ken whaur *he* is, and we maun gang till him. Noo, promise me! vow along wi' me here, as we love him and ane another, that we'll attend mair to what's gude than we hae dune, that—O Willie, forgive me, for it's no my pairt to speak, but I canna help it noo, and just, my bonnie man, just agree wi' me—that we'll gie our hearts for ever to our ain Saviour, and the Saviour o' our wee Davie!"

These words, as she rested her throbbing head on her husband's shoulder, were uttered in low, broken accents, half-choked with an inward struggle, but without a tear. She was encouraged to say all this—for she had a timid awe of her husband—by the pressure ever and anon returned to her hand from his. The smith spoke not, but bent his head over his wife, who felt his tears falling on her neck, as he whispered, "Amen, Jeanie! so help me God!"

A silence ensued, during which Jeanie got, as she said, "a gude greet," for the first time, which took a weight off her heart. She then quietly kissed her child and turned away. Thorburn took the hand of his boy

and said, "Fareweel, my wee Davie, and when you and me meet again, we'll baith, I tak it, be a bit different frae what we are this nicht!" He then put the lid mechanically on the coffin, turned one or two of the screws, and sat down at the fireside to speak about the arrangements of the funeral.

After that, and for the first time in his life, William asked his wife to kneel down, and join with him in prayer before they retired to rest. Poor fellow! he was sincere as ever man was, and never after till the day of his death did he omit this "exercise," which was once almost universal in every family in Scotland, whose "head" was a member of the church; and was even continued by the widow when the "head" was taken away by death. But on this the first time when the smith tried to utter aloud the thoughts of his heart, he could only say, "Our Father—!" There he stopped. Something seemed to seize him, and to repress his utterance. Had he only more fully known how much was in these words, he possibly might have gone on. As it was, the thoughts of the father on earth so mingled, he knew not how, with those of the Father in heaven, that he could not speak. But he continued on his knees, and spoke there to God in his heart as he had never spoken before. Jeanie did the same. After a while they both rose, and Jeanie said, "Thank ye, Willie. It's a beautiful beginning, and it will, I'm sure, hae a braw ending." "It's cauld iron, Jeanie, woman," said the smith, "but it wull heat and come a' richt yet."

The day of the funeral was a day of beauty and sunshine. A few fellow-tradesmen and neighbours assembled in the house, dressed in their Sunday's best, though it was visible in the case of one or two, at least, that their best

was the worse of the wear. The last of his possessions a Scotch workman will part with, even to keep his family in food, are his Sunday clothes ; and the last duty he will fail to perform is that of following the body of a neighbour to the grave.

All those who attended the funeral, and about twenty assembled, had crape on their hats and weepers on their coats. The Corporal had, also, a war-medal on his breast. The smith, according to custom, sat near the door, and shook each man by the hand as he entered. Not a word was spoken.

When all who were expected had assembled, the Dr, who occupied a chair near the table on which the Bible lay, opened the book, and read a portion of the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, without any comment. He then prayed with a fervour and suitableness which touched every heart.

The little coffin was brought out. It was easily carried. The Corporal was the first to step forward. He saluted the smith by putting his hand to his hat, soldier fashion, and begged to have the honour of assisting.

Slowly the small procession advanced towards the churchyard, about half-a-mile off ; and angels beheld that wondrous sight, a child's funeral—wondrous as a symbol of sin, and of redemption, too. It at once speaks of the insignificance of a human being as a mere creature, and of his dignity as belonging to Christ Jesus.

As they reached the grave, the birds were singing, and building their nests in the budding trees. A flood of light steeped in glory a neighbouring range of hills. Overhead, the sky had only one small, snow-white cloud reposing in peace on its azure blue.

When the sexton had finished the grave, and smoothed it down, William quietly seized the spade, and went carefully over the green turf again with gentle beats, removing with his hand the small stones and gravel which roughened its surface. Those who stood very near, had they narrowly watched him, which they had too much feeling to do, might have observed the smith give a peculiar, tender pressure and clap on the grave with his hand, as if on a child's breast, ere he returned the spade, and with a careless air, said, "Here, John, thank ye; it's a' richt noo." Then lifting up his hat, and looking round, he added, "I'm obleeged to you, freens, for your trouble in coming."

And so they left "wee Davie," more precious and more enduring than the everlasting hills!

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Several years after this, Dr M'Gavin, when an old man, as he sat at his study fire, was conversing with a young clergyman who seemed to think that nothing could be accomplished of much value for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, unless by some great "effort," or "movement," or "large committee," which would carry everything before it. The Dr quietly remarked, "My young friend, when you have lived as long in the ministry as I have done, you will learn how true it is, that 'God fulfils Himself in many ways.' He is in the still, small voice, and that often when He is neither in the earthquake nor in the hurricane. One of the most valuable elders I ever had—and whose admirable wife and daughters, and well-doing prosperous sons, are still

members of my church, and my much-attached friends —told me on his dying bed, that, under God, he owed his chief good to the death of his first child, the circumstance which accidentally made me acquainted with him. On the last evening of his life, when enumerating the many things which had been blessed for his good, he said to me, "But, under God, it was my wee Davie that did it a'!"





CANADIAN COPYRIGHT EDITION.

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# THE GOLD THREAD.

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Author of "The Earnest Student," "The Old Lieutenant and his Son," &c., &c.

With Illustrations by J. D. WATSON, GOURLAY STEELL, and  
J. MACWHIRTER.

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I'm a merry, merry squirrel,  
All day I leap and whirl  
Through my home in the old beech-tree;  
If you chase me I will run  
In the shade and in the sun,  
But you never, never can catch me!  
For round a bough I'll creep,  
Playing hide-and-seek so sly,  
Or through the leaves bo-peep,  
With my little shining eye.  
Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!

Up and down I run and frisk  
With my bushy tail to whisk  
All who mope in the old beech-trees;  
How droll to see the owl,  
As I make him wink and scowl,  
When his sleepy, sleepy head I tease!  
And I waken up the bat,  
Who flies off with a scream,  
For he thinks that I'm the cat  
Pouncing on him in his dream.  
Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!

Through all the summer long  
I never want a song  
From my birds in the old beech-trees;  
I have singers all the night,  
And, with the morning bright,  
Come my busy humming fat brown bees  
When I've nothing else to do,  
With the nursing birds I sit,  
And we laugh at the cuckoo  
A cuckooing to her tit!  
Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!

When winter comes with snow,  
And its cruel tempests blow  
All the leaves from my old beech-trees,  
Then beside the wren and mouse  
I furnish up a house,  
Where like a prince I live at my ease!  
What care I for hail or sleet,  
With my hairy cap and coat;  
And my tail across my feet,  
Or wrapp'd about my throat!  
Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!

E A D.

*is Son," &c., &c.*

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